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AN
Eulogium
ON
DE WITT CLINTON,
LATE

Governor of the State of New-York.

DELIVERED AT THE REQUEST OF A JOINT COMMITTEE OF THE MEDICAL
SOCIETY AND COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS, IN
THE HALL OF COLUMBIA COLLEGE, ON FRIDAY,
11TH JULY, 1828.

BY JAMES R. MANLEY, M. D.

NEW-YORK:
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1828.

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NEW-YORK MEDICAL SOCIETY.



Resolved—That the thanks of this Society be presented to Dr. Manley, for his able and interesting discourse on the Life and public character of the late De Witt Clinton; and that the Committee appointed at a former meeting of the Society to confer with a Committee from the College of Physicians and Surgeons for the adoption of suitable testimonies of respect to the memory of the late Governor, solicit a copy of the same for publication.

JOHN J. GRAVES, M. D. Secretary.

July 14, 1828.

Extract from the minutes.

EULOGIUM

&c. &c.



THERE are occasions, when, whether we will or not, our language must be the language of sincerity, and if we are properly instructed, the language of truth also. There are times when the heart by the very constitution of its being, is prevented from making any unhallowed compromise with interest, and when prospective calculations of benefit cease to influence either our opinions or our actions. When called upon to do homage to the dead, the soul recognizes all the solemnity of the service, and will permit no feeling foreign to the duty in which it is engaged, to detract from the melancholy satisfaction which its reverence is calculated to inspire. The present time is emphatically such a season. We have convened to pay our tribute of respect to the illustrious dead, and to acknowledge those obligations to his memory, which neither we, nor our children can discharge in any other manner, than by a frank avowal of our insolvency.

Death in any form, and under any circumstances, is a subject of serious contemplation ; the word itself affects our senses with a chilling influence, which not even a familiarity with its real appearance can completely overcome. When called to mark its ravages in the domestic or social circle ; to witness the anguish and the desolation which follow in its train ; the ruin which can only be repaired by being forgotten ; the expression of sympathy will in

some measure, alleviate our sorrow. But when, as in the present instance, interest is widowed as well as feeling, and we are called to contemplate its triumph in the person of one alike loved, honored, and lamented ; of one whose public life was identified with his country's character ; whose public acts are the memorials of his country's greatness ; when each individual in the community is made to feel that his own family has suffered loss ; then it is that in addition to all the sympathies which private griefs demand as the homage of our affection, every feeling which connects our own respect with the glory of the state, is made to do reverence to the virtues of the dead ; and but for the rebuke which our own impotence suggests, we would rebel against that law of our nature which is the absolute condition of our existence.

With private sorrows we may not intermeddle, their anodynes are not of this world's growth ; he who ordained the blow can alone apply the balm, and in his own good time the wound shall heal. But when a nation grieves—when a million of intelligent freemen put on sackcloth, and feel it to be their duty to cherish the recollection of their bereavement ; it is natural to ask, why all this circumstance of mourning ? What wondrous influence has with magic power, transmuted every varied feeling into an expression of voluntary reverence and unmixed regret ? Although the enquiry is easily answered, nay, although, to a citizen of this state, the answer is obvious, it is not the less our duty to present its solution. It is *not* because the Governor of the state is dead ; it is *not* that the Executive has been suddenly removed in midst of his usefulness, and that fears are entertained that the public service may be embarrassed by the melancholy event ; no—no. New as is this fact in the history of our state, and it is the first of the kind recorded in our annals ; our civil institutions have amply

provided for such an emergency, and all such fears are groundless. But it is because that governor was **DE WITT CLINTON**, certainly not the less man as having occupied the station, but not the greater for that elevation ; one who could claim of right the honors due to the dignity of office ; but who, independently of that dignity which office can confer, challenged the esteem and respect which such distinctions of themselves cannot command.

There are men of whom it may be almost said, that they are qualified by nature to occupy distinguished stations in society ; men whom heaven, as with prophetic unction, occasionally sets aside for high and honorable uses ; who are calculated to be instruments of good almost in despite of circumstances ; men whose moral energies are of such a character, that difficulty and embarrassment are to them but incentives to exertion ; and these are they of whom a country may be proud. The characters of such are public property ; inheritances kindly vouchsafed to compensate the bereavement which the state must suffer in the loss of their personal services : it is as much, therefore, our duty as it is our interest to preserve and transmit them to our children.

The biographical memoirs of our own state are not barren of such characters. We have had our Livingstons, our Clintons, our Hamilton, our Morris, and our Jay—no, let me correct myself, this last we still have, but he is in truth the patriarch of a former age, standing as it were between both worlds, in meekness waiting the summons which shall call him to his audit, that he may receive the rewards of a long life, well spent in the service of his God and country. But their histories have a superadded interest, which cannot attach to eminent men of later date ; their names are associated with the perils as well as with the glory of our beloved country ; and while we enjoy the

blessings for which they contended, both in the field and in the senate, there is little danger that we shall allow ourselves to be libelled by a charge of neglect to cherish the recollection of their virtues. With Mr. Clinton it was otherwise. He knew nothing of that fearful conflict in which they were engaged, except as the mutilated tale of his elder school-fellow may have interested the curiosity of his childhood ; his reputation, therefore, in no respect stands indebted to those circumstances connected with our independence, which give an additional lustre to the names of our revolutionary worthies. It was acquired not only unaided, but almost in despite of circumstances which, in others, would have materially diminished the ardour of its pursuit. His early life teaches a lesson which cannot be too often addressed to such as are prone to think that they have attained the end of their studies when they receive the certificates of their scholarship ; his early education, although the best which the country at that time afforded, in place of flattering his vanity was made the instrument to rebuke his deficiencies ; his estimate of himself was formed, not on a comparison with others, who although possessed of the same advantages, were far beneath him in point of acquirement ; but on the settled and wholesome conviction that those advantages if neglected, instead of conferring character, would put at hazard the amount already attained. Accordingly we find that the years of his opening manhood, exempt from the taxation which pride fashion or amusement too often impose on young men with his prospects, were wholly occupied in the diligent cultivation of his mind : and to the habits of application thus early acquired, was he through all his future life indebted, for the ease, rapidity, and correctness, which mark almost every page of his varied writing, and which seem to have rendered his business, his recreation.

In order to form a judgment of such a man, his public character (which is all we purpose to consider) should be examined in all the varied relations in which it can be presented, and although it is impossible, within the limits allotted to this address, so to exhibit it, we may offer sufficient data to direct public opinion in the enquiry, by presenting a sketch of his life, which however imperfect or deficient in detail, will not fail of some measure of interest.

As far back as the reign of Charles the first, the family from which Mr. Clinton was lineally descended, was possessed of such character and influence as to draw down upon themselves the displeasure of the powers that then were, for their attachment to the cause of that ill-fated monarch; on which account during the usurpation of Cromwell, they were obliged to expatriate themselves. After various mutations of place and fortune, they finally settled at Longford, in Ireland, where his grandfather Colonel Charles Clinton was born: he emigrated to this country in the year 1729, and being a man of letters and a good mathematician, it was not long before his reputation procured for him the appointment of surveyor under the colonial government.

At that time, with the exceptions of the counties bordering upon the Hudson, and the western extremity of Long Island, now constituting the counties of Kings and Queens, this whole state might have been properly called a wilderness, and the improvements necessary in a country so circumstanced, and rapidly settling, put such talents as Col. Clinton possessed, in special requisition. His intimacy with the Hon. Geo. Clinton, who by the appointment of the crown, was the Governor of the colony from the year 1743 to the year 1753, no doubt contributed at a later period of his life, to give him an influence in the state, which independently of such patronage he might not have

possessed. He settled in Ulster county, and educated a family of four sons and one daughter; of the sons, two, Alexander and Charles, were bred to the profession of medicine, and lived to practice it; they both died without children. The others, James and George, distinguished themselves as minor officers in the war of 1756, and again in the war of independence, in which each held the rank of a major-general in the American army: the latter was the governor of this state for twenty-one years, and subsequently Vice-President of the United States, which office he held at the time of his death, in 1812.

De Witt Clinton was born in 1769, at the residence of his father, Gen. James Clinton, New Windsor, Orange Co. in this state, and received his early education at a grammar school in a neighbouring village called Stonefield, under the care of the Rev. John Moffat, from which he was transferred at the age of thirteen, to an academy at Kingston, then conducted by Mr. John Addison. He remained here until he was prepared to enter the junior class of Columbia college in 1784, and was graduated a Batchelor of Arts, at the first public commencement held in this institution after the close of the revolutionary war, being adjudged worthy to receive the honor of delivering the Latin salutatory address, an honor always conferred on the best classic scholar of the year. On his leaving college he entered upon the study of the law, under the direction of the late Samuel Jones, a gentleman deservedly eminent in his profession, formerly Recorder of this city, at a subsequent period Comptroller of the state, and the father of the late Chancellor, now Chief-justice of our superior court. Under such tuition, with a mind well disciplined to habits of study, and stored with all the elementary knowledge necessary to the easy acquisition of his profession, he could not fail to make progress in proportion to the facilities which were

afforded him, and accordingly we find him in 1790, practising at the bar, with a success which gave promise of future reputation and independence.

But a different field for the exercise of his talents was soon allotted him; about this period the collisions of party politics, which in a free country and within reasonable limits, are the tides which preserve the currents of public opinion in health and purity, assumed an aspect calculated to put in requisition the best talents of the opposing parties. The federal constitution had just been adopted by this state, and although it was an event as auspicious in its promise as it has been happy in its results, it was a measure which had to contend with much opposition; honest differences of opinion existed, not so much however, on the absolute propriety of the measure, as on its expediency at that particular time; and before those differences had been settled up, or leisure had been allowed to test its benefits, the French revolution broke out, and the sympathies of freemen who themselves, had but just escaped from the bondage of a foreign prince, and whose wounds received in the conflict had scarcely healed, were permitted in many instances to control their judgments. Thus were the seeds of the two great political parties which for years divided this state, first sown, and they flourished with the luxuriance of weeds in a soil peculiarly fitted for their culture; the one depending for its support on the above sources, the other striving to maintain the ascendancy of opinions, which their advocates believed were not only the palladium of our national strength, but the nation's chief security for the continuance of peace. Mr. Clinton was at this time the secretary of his uncle, who was the governor of the state, and whose administration came in for a large share of party obloquy. Under such circumstances, with every republican principle which early education had

implanted, strengthened by the respect and reverence which he entertained for his uncle, he could not resist the opportunity now offered, to avow himself an advocate of the doctrines and policy of the state administration, and he became a public writer on the popular topics of the day. He entered the lists of political combatants against fearful odds, as a large majority of the talents, wealth, and influence of the state were engaged in opposition; nothing intimidated however, by the power and resources of his adversaries, for at that time the corporate patronage of the city of New-York was controlled by the wealth, rather than by the number of its citizens; he acquired for himself such a weight of respect and influence, notwithstanding the defeat of the party to which he had attached himself, that in a few years afterwards, upon a change of politics, he became by common consent one of its most distinguished leaders.

In 1798 he was elected a member of the assembly of this state, from this city, and in 1800 was chosen a senator for the southern district, and a member of the council of appointment. In that situation it was his misfortune to differ from the Executive, then Mr. Jay, on the subject of the concurrent right of nomination to office: the majority of the council being of one opinion and the governor entertaining another, not easily reconcileable at that particular juncture, they each made their several representations to the legislature, which resulted in a call of a convention for the purpose of altering the constitution of the state. It was altered in accordance with the views of the majority of the council; but whether it was amended or not, is not at this day a matter concerning which men may reasonably differ, as it has presented the best evidence of a truth which ought always to be obvious; that a time of high party excitement is by no means the most favourable for the discussion of fundamental principles in politics. From the senate of

this state, by a joint ballot of both branches of the legislature, he was elected to a seat in the senate of the United States, where he took an active interest in the concerns of the country, in relation to the differences then existing with the Spanish authorities at New-Orleans. His continuance in that august body, however, was short, as on receiving the appointment of Mayor of New-York, in October, 1803, it became necessary that he should resign it, the duties of the two offices being by law incompatible. In the office of Mayor he was continued by annual appointment until March, 1807, when by reason of one of those changes of party which occasionally occur, and are more in appearance than in reality, and not inappropriately designated by the term *political mirage*, he was superceded and remained out of office eleven months, as he was appointed Mayor again by the council, in February, 1808. His term of office, at this time, was a little more than two years, when another partial party change again removed him, and he remained out of office another term of eleven months! In February, 1811, he was again, and for the third time, appointed Mayor, and he continued in office by yearly appointment until the 20th of March, 1815, a term which included the whole period of the late war. It is worthy of remark that a political change in the state, in 1813, caused an almost entire change in its civil commissions, and in conformity with that rule of proscription which seemed to have assumed as its basis, that so soon as a party were in a minority, every individual belonging to it was disqualified for any official trust, (which by the way distracted, and I had almost said disgraced this state for more than twenty years), Mr. Clinton would have been removed from office; but so great was the measure of confidence which the public reposed in him, that his political opponents petitioned their own friends for his re-appointment in place of his re-

moval, so that the virulence of party was disarmed by a consciousness of his peculiar fitness for the station. The change of parties however was as usual, ephemeral, and his political enemies were soon relieved from the necessity of paying this homage to his character. An occasion such as war, could not fail to bring out in strong relief, the strong points of Mr. Clinton's character. At the head of the police of a large city, the resort of many foreigners, numbering among its inhabitants many alien enemies, and distracted by party collisions, rendered more violent and virulent than usual by the decided character of the political measures growing out of the state of war between the two countries; with a large proportion of naturalized citizens, many of whom were at heart aliens to the interests of the country, when those interests were in opposition to their own, and a heartless support of the measures of government from an honest conviction of the inexpediency, though not the unrighteousness of the war, he found himself called upon to exert a measure of prudence and decision, of caution, forecast, and judgment, which, but for an occasion such as this, may have lain dormant during a lifetime in the absence of the necessity for its exercise.

The late war between England and this country though sudden, was not unexpected; although all regretted its necessity, few betrayed surprise at the event; its righteous causes had long been operating to prepare the public mind for this last appeal to its patriotism. As far back as the date of the expiration of the treaty made by Mr. Jay, those causes had been acquiring strength and intensity. Not only had the interests of the United States suffered immensely by the vexatious enactments of the British government, which had embarrassed, and, in some instances, in fact interdicted our commercial intercourse with foreign nations, but its moral feeling had in countless instances been outraged by the

impressment of our seamen; and so pacific had been the policy of this country, that wantonness almost found its apology by mistaking our forbearance for a manifestation of weakness, and our patience for pusillanimity. To a mind such as Mr. Clinton possessed, the evidences of a future war were as conclusive as the result proved them to be just, he therefore used his utmost exertions to guard against disastrous surprise, come when it might. In 1808, all the influence he possessed was used with the legislature of the state, to induce them to make appropriations for the defence of this city, and he accepted the appointment of member of a board of commissioners to superintend the erection of works of defence. In 1812, when the declaration of war came, whatever may have been his private opinion of its expediency at the time; he considered it the voice of the country pronounced by the government, and calling upon every virtuous citizen to sustain her in the conflict. When the embarrassed situation of the finances of the United States, did not enable government to provide for the defence of the city, he recommended to the corporation over whom he presided, the bold but patriotic step of providing, under its own guarantee, funds sufficient for that purpose; a loan of one million of dollars was accordingly opened, and Mr. Clinton drafted the feeling and forcible address which was made to the patriotism of the citizens on that occasion: the loan was filled, and the money expended under the direction of the committee of defence. Although not a member of that committee, his advice to, and influence with them was of the utmost importance.

During the progress of the war, considering, as he in one of his addresses expresses himself, "that illustrious achievements in science and in arms constitute the glory of a nation, and that patriotism will unite with policy and

justice in conferring the honors and rewards which are due to distinguished merit ;” he, on all occasions of our naval and military victories, used his influence with the common council of this city to confer civic honors on our gallant commanders. His addresses on these occasions, which were not unfrequent, breathed the purest spirit of intelligent patriotism, and while he spoke to those fortunate officers, whom, on the part of the municipality, it was his duty to congratulate, the breasts of his fellow-citizens responded every sentiment he uttered, and he awakened those patriotic and devoted feelings which were not only necessary, but essential at such a crisis, to a successful termination of the war ;—party spirit was absorbed in zeal for the general good, and all hearts and all hands united with enthusiasm in preparations for the general defence.

During the last term of his mayoralty, he was elected lieutenant-governor of the state, in the place of the Hon. John Broome, deceased, and he continued to officiate both as President of the Senate and Mayor of the city for two years, viz. from 1811 to 1813. In the spring of 1815 he was again superceded, and deprived of all his public employments except that of canal commissioner : the tide of popular or rather party favour, which in 1812 seemed to have attained its topmost height in his own state, from that time began to ebb, but it was only for a short season, long enough, however, to give him ample opportunity to digest and arrange definitive measures for the construction of the grand Erie canal which had long been the object of his solicitude, and had occupied the attention of several different legislatures ; although the project had been all but abandoned through the combined agency of fears, which distrusted the ability of the state to bring the work to a successful issue, on the one hand ; and the necessity of directing all its energies to a vigorous prosecution of the war,

on the other. The fidelity, the zeal, the industry and the intelligence which he brought to bear on this subject, not only changed the current public opinion, but fixed that opinion on a foundation much too strong to admit of its being seriously shaken during the future progress of the work. In 1817, Mr. Clinton was elected the Governor of the state, and at the expiration of the term for which he was chosen, viz. 1820, he was re-elected and served till the adoption of the new state constitution which took effect from the commencement of the year 1823, and shortened the ordinary term of office by six months. In the autumn 1822, he declined another nomination, and returned to the pursuits of private life, holding only the office of a canal commissioner; from which he was removed in the spring of 1824, by a vote of the legislature, which the people rebuked in a most emphatic manner six months afterwards, by again electing him their Governor, and by the largest majority ever known in this state, in a contested election; and he continued to exercise the office to the last hour of his valuable life. He died suddenly in the full possession of all his mental vigour on the evening of the 11th of February last, without having been at any time sensible of any premonitory evidence of approaching dissolution.

This is a short and necessarily a very imperfect record of his public life, but it will be confessed that it furnishes the most undoubted evidence of the exalted estimate which his fellow citizens had formed of his moral and political worth; his public character is simply a matter of obvious inference. Perhaps no man in this country was ever more uninterruptedly occupied in public duties from the age of his majority to the day of his death. Viewed in whatever situation we may, whether legislative judicial or executive, for each of those relations he repeatedly sustained; at all seasons, whether in a time of peace, a time of war, or a

time of pestilence; in seasons of high party excitement or in a political calm, he always evinced those essentials of character which accompany true greatness. Some of these qualities he possessed in an eminent degree, and among them *candour*, *decision* and *firmness of purpose*, were not the least remarkable. He scorned to hold equivocal opinions and would leave nothing conjectural, which with the information he possessed, language could reduce to certainty; his state papers, his public speeches, and his official correspondence, whether written or verbal, bear ample testimony to this truth. He never took council of fear or betrayed the least measure of hesitancy when resolution was required; never courted a compromising policy, or aimed to divide his own proper responsibility. In all the various duties which during a long course of public service he was called to discharge, his promptness was manifested, and sometimes to an extent which a timid friend might construe as indiscretion; and when with the best information he possessed or could consult, he had ascertained what was duty, he fearlessly performed it, relying on the results to justify to the public, what his own conscience had approved. With a mind thus constituted, and possessing an excellent education which habits of industry and close observation had highly improved, it was natural that he should aspire to take the front rank in a society where such qualities were properly appreciated: accordingly we find him at an early age wielding the destinies of a numerous and powerful party, and controlling without apparent effort, its united energies. For sixteen years he was a party leader, and as such possessed a measure of influence in the councils of this state, which no individual before him, had ever attained. It was a station for which he was peculiarly qualified at a time when party distinctions were based on principles, and the weapons of party warfare were open

manly intelligent and fearless expressions of opinion; and such was its condition in this country from the year 1796 to the year 1812. The characters of the statesman and partisan politician may, in such seasons, both well combine in the patriot, although the copartnership must cease whenever appeals to passion, prejudice or sectional interest become essential to party success. It is then that the statesman and politician are obliged by necessity to part company, and mark their courses on different charts, since the comprehensive views of the one, but ill accord with the narrow and exclusive policy of the other, and no human ingenuity can make them consist. Mr. Clinton early learned the lesson, which even experience cannot teach the mere politician, till it is too late to be of use: "that a solid reputation must be anchored in the good sense of the community, and not be simply dependant on the passion or caprice of a multitude; that actions to be great, or their glory permanent, must commend themselves to the understanding of an intelligent people;" and the truth thus early acquired was never forgotten; the conviction of it supported and gave a spring to his exertions for his country's good, in times when all other supports, save the consciousness of the rectitude of his intentions, were swept from beneath him. For many years he had to contend with the most rancorous opposition from men who differed from him in political principle, and when this opposition ceased, he was heavily assessed in another form, and paid the tax, however unreasonable, which distinction always imposes. With opposition in almost every form his experience had made him familiar but he feared it, infinitely less even in its most successful assaults, than the possibility that his enemies might find plausible cause to justify it. The results of such a moral, acting on such a mind can be readily anticipated: precisely in the proportion that he lost his party friends, he

acquired the support of the collective public. On his part, the prejudices of early life were dissipated by a more intimate knowledge of human nature, and on their's, admiration of his talents combined with the conviction of his integrity forbade the indulgence of those unfriendly feelings which were formerly called up by party differences ; so that for the last twelve years of his life, he was beyond controversy the most popular man in this state. And that he was deservedly so, requires no other evidence than the spontaneous expression of regret on his decease which we have all witnessed. If we cast our eyes over the surface of this great state, where shall we find a spot which has not felt the genial influence of his talents, or has not received its proportional measure of benefit from his exertions ? If we extend our view across the mountain barrier which but lately separated us from a western wilderness, and behold by assured anticipation, that wilderness transformed into a garden “to make glad the hope of the husbandman ;” or transport ourselves to the shores of our inland seas and mark the rapid change from savage life to civilization ; if we trace the yet recent history of our literary, scientific, benevolent and œconomical institutions, and find the seal of his character impressed upon their charters, surely we need no additional testimony : since envy itself, in the indulgence of the most malign spirit of detraction, without adding the sin of slander to the black catalogue of her other offences, cannot dispute his claim to public gratitude. He loved his own state, and he had much reason ; it had been the asylum of his fathers in the days of their trouble ; and it had been purchased by sacrifices in which they had largely participated : here it was, that he was born and educated. He had grown with its growth, and ripened into usefulness as it had increased in prosperity, and he had the satisfaction to know, for of this it was simply impossible that he

should have remained ignorant, that he had an agency in developing those resources of intellect and wealth which are the present foundations of its influence and power. But although his devotion to its interests was ardent, it was tempered by an expansive patriotism which would not admit it to be exclusive or sectional. His views were not limited to this state or to this generation, but embraced the welfare of the union and had respect to the happiness of posterity. He saw that its progress in the march of improvement though it was certain, might be slow, unless its resources were well understood and fully estimated, and he therefore gave himself to this object with a singleness of purpose which allowed no minor considerations to take precedence in his affections.

The two great subjects which engaged his attention with unceasing solicitude, were the extension of the benefits of education, and the completion of that monument of our state's wisdom and munificence, the **GRAND CANAL**. In the first of these great works, thanks to that spirit of enlightened legislation which marks the policy of this state, there were no difficulties to encounter, no prejudices to conciliate or to overcome : his task was easy, and he prosecuted it with an ardour proportioned to its immense importance: every branch of education from its principles to its highest attainments ; and every avenue by which it might be acquired, from the district school by the road side, to the halls of the state university, found in him the zealous friend, the liberal patron, and the enlightened and influential advocate. But with the last, it was far otherwise.

A water communication between the great lakes and the Hudson had long been a subject of agreeable anticipation with many of the most judicious and intelligent men in this state; it frequently had been spoken of as a thing probable in some distant time, but the name of him who first suggested

it, is at this day a matter of conjecture, perhaps from the circumstance, that the design and its accomplishment were too remotely connected to make the claim worth preserving: it is reasonable to suppose however that the first hints may have been derived from some intelligent director of the inland lock navigation company. Like most other great works it may have owed its inception to accidental suggestion. It is very certain that until the year 1808, the plan of a still-water navigation from lake Erie to the Hudson never seriously occupied the public mind, although the project of locks around the cataract of Niagara, the navigation of lake Ontario, and a communication from it to the Mohawk river by the help of its tributary streams, were subjects naturally calculated to create and keep alive the enterprising spirit of all those who felt an immediate interest in such improvements. But let the credit of the design be awarded to whom it may, of one fact all are now convinced: **DE WITT CLINTON HAS OF RIGHT, THE GLORY OF ITS EXECUTION:** and when we consider the number, the respectability, the talents and the influence of the canal commissioners, from their first appointment in 1810, to the completion of the work, all are constrained to allow that his agency has given to his character an enviable distinction. Perhaps if we except the committee which in June 1776 laid upon the table of the old congress that manifesto of public wrongs and declaration of public rights, which so far as a moral cause could operate, made this country free and independent; there never was a committee more entitled to public confidence for their wisdom zeal and patriotism, than that to which this great work was entrusted; and yet strange as it may appear, for six years they laboured with a devotedness, an assiduity and a measure of patience unparalleled in a public body, without accomplishing any thing which

could give promise of a successful result. Mistaken interest; a distrust of the state's ability to execute the stupendous work; the conflicts of opinion in reference to the modes of raising the necessary funds; the discrepancy of the designs which from time to time were presented as the bases of calculation; and especially that all absorbing cause of solicitude, the late war between England and these United States, all tended to distract effort, paralyze enterprize and procrastinate the period of its efficient commencement. Of all these causes of impediment, but one could be sustained, and to that, all submitted, because as a paramount object it claimed undivided attention; the others however were sufficient to repress, though they could not extinguish the zeal which animated the advocates of the measure. In 1816, the war having terminated, it was deemed expedient to make one more vigorous effort in order to its accomplishment, and Mr. Clinton, then freed from all the cares of official duty other than those which appertained to this object, was selected to draft the appeal to the public in its behalf. This task he discharged in such a masterly manner, in the form of a memorial of the citizens of New-York to the legislature of the state, as carried the conviction of its value propriety and feasibility, to the mind of every person in the community who would be at the trouble to examine its merits: it consisted of arguments addressed to patriotism, to state pride, to interest, nay to avarice itself, if need had been for such an appeal: it was replete with information derived from authentic sources, calculated to strike the understanding with the force of mathematical truth well understood: it abounded in facts, not only valuable as materials of national history, but interesting as sources of national wealth, and contained estimates of expences and receipts, of capital and profit so plainly exhibited, as to place beyond all reasonable doubt, the expediency of the

measure considered even in the narrow view, of an immediately lucrative investment of public property. So natural, perspicuous and conclusive was its reasoning that few were inclined, and none could successfully controvert its sound œconomical doctrines. From the publication of this able paper, the public may date the effective commencement of the Erie canal, and to it we are indebted for all the glorious results which followed. From this time opposition became torpid, zeal animated, and interest enterprizing. It is unnecessary to follow out its history to its final completion in 1825 ; it is sufficient for our present purpose, and to substantiate Mr. Clinton's claim to the merit of its execution, to note the fact, that in all the subsequent embarrassments which attended the progress of the work, and they were neither few, nor of small account, he stood foremost as its decided though unfee'd advocate, staked his character on its success, and tendered his reputation as its surety ; contented to pass for a visionary projector if its completion did not realize the promise, or the final result should prove disastrous, or disappoint expectation. He lived to see the consummation of the work, and the satisfaction derived from a consciousness of the success of his agency, was *all the recompence he ever received.*

The public life of this great man was a continued career of honourable and arduous service, and now that he is no more, we wonder with the simplicity of children, that he should ever have been obliged to contend with opposition. His public worth, though acknowledged by all, could not shield him from censure. It was said that he had a *personal party*, and if this be a crime, those who will cherish the recollection of his virtues will be among the last to wish him absolved from it, since it proves uncontestedly that his private life was as amiable as his public life was honourable and useful. In countries where power, wealth and here-

ditary rank can not only make dependents, but rivet their submission, this is an offence against which every liberal feeling must revolt, and it can only be tolerated from a necessity which the people cannot control; but in this, where every man is proud of his respect, and jealous of his personal importance; where education is diffused, political right well understood, and the highway to honorable distinction is so widely thrown open, that all may contend for it without the adventitious aids of rank or riches; such a charge when true, conveys the highest compliment which even a friend could offer, and coming from his opponents, is conclusive of his worth. Mr. Clinton possessed none of those worldly accommodations which are at all times calculated to make friends at a first interview; he never cultivated them, he could not cultivate them; he had that moral independence growing out of a conviction of duty, and that moral confidence growing out of enlightened views of it, that they were to him unnecessary; he could not solicit that respect which he believed a full knowledge of his character would enable him to exact. That he had such a party is true, and the fact is one of the brightest testimonials that can be offered of his merits.

It would be too much to expect that public sentiment should be a unit in relation to its estimate of our late governor: he filled too large a space in the public view, was too much occupied in the discharge of duties purely executive; the field of his active exertions, our own state, to whose interests he was in heart and soul devoted, has been too much and too long distracted by party divisions, and he in early life participated too largely in them, to allow of such an inference; but since the day that the FATHER OF HIS COUNTRY was gathered to the tomb of his fathers, the public expression of regret for a public loss was never more deep toned or emphatic than when DE WITT CLINTON died

—The fact is his Eulogium compared with which all others sink in utter insignificance. This is a testimony which as it cannot be mistaken, cannot be indebted to the sculptured marble for its duration ; *this*, the seal of approbation imprinted on our memories to be transmitted to our children. The lustre of his name shall outlast all frail memorials of his virtues, which the gratitude of a people may raise to perpetuate them. Let therefore, his biographer describe him as he was, our veneration shall embalm his character that history may transmit it to future ages. His is the fame that follows after : his—an evergreen glory, and the ivy that entwines his monument, which no frosts can blight nor storms detach, shall be its appropriate emblem ; for when the column falls, as fall it will, crumbled to fragments by the weight of time, there then shall still remain a mound of ever living and ever blooming verdure, to mark the spot where lies all that could die of ONE whom generations yet unborn shall call their BENEFACTOR.



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